

## The Utopian Pleasure of Dark Places in Mishima's Literature

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Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) was a brilliant novelist. At the same time, he is frequently viewed as a nihilist and a narcissist, fascinated only by aspects of desire, beauty and death from an entirely selfish point of view. My argument is that his writing actually embodies a far sharper critical engagement with post-war Japanese culture and politics. While most critics have discussed his so-called 純文学, I will concentrate on his 大衆文学, in particular, *Inochi urimasu* (1968). On one level, this novel seems inconsequential, cheap and trashy. However, I believe that Mishima uses the very 'shallowness' of this novel as a sharp tool to challenge what he saw as the stifling, deadly dull conservatism of post-war Japanese family life and personal relationships. Furthermore, I suggest that his use of a light-hearted 大衆 literary style as a way to critique 純 literature during the 20th century can be compared to a similar critical dynamic between 俗 and 雅 texts during the Edo period.